value of US$ 33.7 billion at 1991-92 prices and exchange rates.

(d) Export promotion is a continuous process and steps are taken to boost exports in consultation with trade, industry and other relevant interests. The Government is striving to make the environment of policies and procedures more export friendly. The measures include grant of income tax exemption on export profits, access to cheaper export credit designated in convertible currency, and assistance to Export Promotion Councils for export market development. It is expected that in the export-friendly environment provided by the Government and with the efforts of trade and industry, the targets are likely to be achieved.

PM's visit to Vietnam

2047. SHRIMATI VEENA VERMA: SHRI RAJUBHAI A. PARMAR:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Prime Minister during his recent visit to Vietnam had discussed various proposals for augmenting trade and economic ties between the two countries;

(b) if so, the details of proposals and the agreements and protocols signed; and

(c) the new additional areas of trade and commerce opened up thereby?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) During PM's visit, an agreement on avoidance of Double Taxation was signed. In addition, two MOUs were proposed-one on cooperation in the mining sector and the other on cooperation in traditional medicines.

In the course of the visit, cooperation with Vietnam for setting up of power, fertiliser and agro processing projects and tie-ups for trade in agricultural commodities was proposed. Some joint venture agreements were also signed between cooperate entities on the two sides.

The Joint Working Group which was set up pursuant to a decision taken during PM's visit to Vietnam, set in New Delhi on 16-18 January 1995 and agreed on several steps for strengthening economic and commercial relations between the two countries. A number of areas of cooperation such as animal husbandary, dairying, aquaculture, food processing, sugar production, tyre manufacturing, mining, tele-communications, setting up gas- based power and fertiliser plants etc. were identified by the Joint Working Group.

Prospects for Rubber Plantation

2048. SHRI NILOTPAL BASU: SHRI DIPANKAR MUKHERJEE:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the present production of natural rubber in India;

(b) what additional areas (in hectare) is being considered for new rubber plantation and the expected yield thereof;

(c) what is the prospect of new rubber plantation in Kerala, North Eastern States, Andaman Islands and other parts;

(d) whether Tripura is considered as a resourceful area for new rubber plantation; if so, envisaged area to be brought under rubber plantation and the expected yield thereof; and

(e) whether Government is considering development of Natural Rubber based Industries in Tripura, particularly with such end products which can be marketed in the State and/or the adjoining States?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The production of natural rubber in the country during

1993-94 was 435,160 tonnes. The estimated production of rubber during the current year is 472,000 tonnes.

(b) It is proposed to plant an additional area of 41,500 ha with rubber during the period from 1993-94 to 1997-98. This area is estimated to produce 62,250 tonnes per annum when the full yielding stage is attained.

(c) Scope for expansion of rubber cultivation in traditional areas of Kerala is very limited. However, large scale expansion of rubber cultivation is possible in non-traditional tracts in North East States and in the Andamans & Nicobar Islands. Areas marginally suited for rubber cultivation are also existing in Goa, certain parts of Karnataka, Southern Parts of Konkan region of Maharashtra, Gangam, Dhenknal, Puri, Cuttak, Mayurbhanj and Balasore districts in Orissa and Vishakapattnam & East Godavari districts of Andhra Pradesh and certain parts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri district of West Bengal.

(d) Yes, Sir. An estimated area of 50,000 ha is available for rubber cultivation in Tripura. An area of 18,670 ha is already under rubber cultivation in Tripura and it is proposed to replant 7,500 ha in the State during period from 1993-94 to 1997-98. The estimated yield from this area would be 10,500 tonnes per annum (average yield per ha being 1400 kg).

(e) There is no special scheme under Rubber Board to encourage natural rubber based industries in Tripura.

Bills Relating to Amendment in Various Laws Following GATT Accord

2049. SHRI P. UPENDRA:
SHRI CHIMANBHAI MEHTA:

Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to refer to answer to Unstarred Question 769 given in the Rajya Sabha on the 12th December, 1994 and state:

(b) whether Government have decided to introduce new Bills as well as the amending Bills to existing Statutes to give effect to the provisions of GATT ratification; and

(c) whether any accrual of benefits of disadvantage has occurred due to GATT to our country with details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) Amendments to the Customs Traiff Act and the Patents Act were made through ordinances promulgated on 31 December, 1994. The Bill replacing the ordinance amending the Patents Act was passed by the Lok Sabha. The Bill replacing the ordinance amending the Customs Tariff Act has been approved by Parliament.

(b) The WTO agreement came into effect from 1.1.1995. The tariff reduction commitments are to take place over a period of five to six years. Access commitments in agriculture are also to be implemented over a similar period. It is too early to quantify the accrual of benefits.

Import of POL-and non-POL Products

2050. DR. B.B. DUTTA: Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the growth in the imports of POL and non-POL products during the last three years;

(b) the reasons for increase in non-POL imports; and

(c) steps taken to keep the imports of non-POL products under check?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) The growth (in%) in the imports of POL and non-POL products, in dollar terms (provisional) during the last three years are given below:

	POL	Non-POL
1991-92	-11.8%	-21.9%
1992-93	-11.2%	12.4%
1993-94	- 3.3%	10.6%